

# DRAMA



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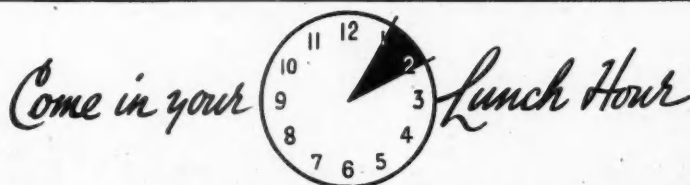
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# DRAMA

*The Quarterly Theatre Review*

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NEW SERIES

AUTUMN 1948

NUMBER 10

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## FURTHER OUTLOOK

### *Address to the Conference by the Director*

IT is both an honour and a great responsibility which I assume to-day. For nearly thirty years Mr. Geoffrey Whitworth has occupied this Chair at the Conference of the League which he founded, and to follow one who has devoted his life to the building up of an organisation so great and complex in itself, and so influential in the development of the theatre, is to undertake a task which asks for the highest attainment if one is adequately to carry on the growth which he began and fostered. On this occasion I feel it may be well to spend some time in trying to survey the theatre as it has emerged from these thirty years of growth, and our own organisation in relation to it, so that we may be in a position to discuss what needs to be done in future.

The theatre in 1948 presents a picture so different from that of 1918 that we may say a revolution has happened in the meanwhile. To-day we see ourselves within sight of a National Theatre; we possess the Arts Council as a vehicle for State-aid for dramatic art; we have seen the growth of professional work of the highest standard on a non-profit-distributing basis, which ensures that artistic values are placed first; we have seen drama not only recognised as a creative force, but eagerly sought after by people of every age and type; and in the field of amateur drama (which the League in practice spends most of its time serving) we have seen a development not only numerically vast, but which also has established new artistic standards in spare-time work.

In all this the League has played a part of which we, as its members, may be proud. It was not only the first of the purely voluntary bodies to work for the ends of which we have just noted the attainment; it was also the one whose aim was specifically artistic. Among many vicissitudes I think we may claim

that the League has preserved that character, and I am sure that we must closely guard it. Equally carefully must we preserve that which was insisted upon by its first President, Granville-Barker—the oneness of the theatre in all its branches, and the League must always seek to break down any barriers that exist between the professional and the amateur, or between those who love the theatre purely for its own sake, and those who link it with educational and social work. All these should rightfully belong in the one theatre.

Now I hope you will follow me from the statement of these principles to the practical application of them ; to the League as it is and as we wish it to be. Before talking of ourselves, however, I should like to say a few words about some of the other organisations which are at work in the theatre, and with which the League should strive to work in harmonious collaboration. Senior to ourselves is the National Operatic and Dramatic Association ("NODA"), whose Director we welcome here and with whom we have friendly contact which I hope may become closer. And in Scotland there is the S.C.D.A., with which I have many personal ties of work and friendship, and which stands most effectively for all we believe in : may the measure of co-operation which now exists between us be greatly extended in the future ! Then in the last few years, a variety of new organisations has grown up. This, I am sure, is a healthy sign that the theatre is becoming the concern of the whole people.

First, of course, there is the British Theatre Conference, which succeeded early this year in functioning as at least a provisional parliament of the British Theatre, though one of the most important interests in the theatre is not yet represented on it. The League has from the first been actively connected with it and I hope that this connection will continue and be strengthened. Through such a Conference we get a just view of the balance between all the varied interests in the theatre. The many thousands of its workers, and even more important, its audience, may come to understand its nature.

Another body, also recently formed, is the Standing Conference of Drama Associations. This is a consultative federation of the County Drama Committees. They have now been set up in most counties in England as a result of the work of the Joint Committee for Drama of the National Council of Social Service, succeeded by the Music and Drama Committee of the Carnegie Trust. Their purpose is the furtherance of good dramatic work, particularly in rural areas, through the combined effort of voluntary associations and the Local Education Authority, and their method is usually to work through a paid County Drama Adviser who, however, can only succeed if he is actively supported by his Committee and by the co-operation of drama-lovers all over the county. The result has been that in many parts of England already a great awakening has taken place. The Carnegie policy rightly envisages that within a short term of years the Local Education Authority shall assume financial obligation for this

service, which is statutory under the new Education Act. But there will still be need of the fullest co-operation from the voluntary bodies who, after all, represent the active effort of the theatre-lovers, on whom the reality of creative work must always depend.

The League is represented on these County Committees, but a very much closer co-operation is possible, both between the League and the Standing Conference nationally, and also between the League and the Committee in each county. I am quite sure that this development will be for the good of both parties and more important, for the good of the art which both parties exist to promote.

The Standing Conference is one example of a number of bodies which have become in recent years wholly or partly concerned with drama from an educational and social point of view. The Women's Institutes, the Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. and various organisations of Youth Clubs, Townswomen's Guilds, and so on—all these are concerned in the matter, and again we want to establish a closer co-operation with them. In its particular sphere, there is the Religious Drama Society, with which I am personally connected, and which is doing work parallel to our own for Christian Drama. Significant on the artistic side is the Little Theatre Guild. This is composed of companies which have their own theatre and which attain to an agreed standard in programme and presentation. It is of an importance to the amateur theatre very much greater than its present numbers might suggest. I believe that the League will be false both to the principles on which it was founded and to its future in the theatre if it allows the enormous growth in amateur activity to water down its policy of maintaining the highest artistic standards. The Little Theatre Guild has something to teach us here, and I hope we may be both willing to learn and willing to help it in the realisation of its aims.

Then I would suggest to you the very great importance of the foundation in various localities of Theatre Guilds. These Guilds, in the true British fashion, vary greatly in constitution and in their practical working, but the broad purpose of all of them is the same. They are loose federations of the amateur societies in a particular town or district with the objects of avoiding clashes of date and providing a balanced programme of such mutual help and criticism as can be provided locally, and of organising local festivals, schools, and other co-operative efforts. I believe that the decentralisation of many of the activities of amateur drama is absolutely necessary, both because of its sheer size, and also because it should use the loyalty of people to their local traditions and the material which local life provides for creative work. I have had the privilege of visiting some of the Guilds and of talking with the representatives of most of them, and here again I feel sure that we can develop an active co-operation with advantage to everyone.

Now I should pass on to discuss our own organisation, its present state

and what it needs for the future. I should like to suggest to you that its many faults, of which you are, I am glad to say, constantly critical, are largely due to the fact that like Topsy it "just grewed." But it is unlike Topsy in that its parent, the theatre, has recently grown much faster than itself. A purely voluntary organisation starting from scratch is necessarily always struggling for the means to fulfil the demands which an active movement makes upon it, and the movement in the theatre has, in these last thirty years, been active indeed. So we have seen a constant struggle to meet not only the demands, but also the opportunities which the vision of its Director saw in the work of the League. None of you here would wish to belittle its record, but all of you are with me, I know, in wishing to see that record bettered if possible in the years to come, and that means that we must try, both at Headquarters and in the various regions of Britain, to bring both our vision of the League's function and our organisation of its resources up-to-date, and more than up-to-date.

May I suggest some practical steps which I believe to be necessary, and may I begin with this Conference? To-day we have an Agenda of Resolutions sent in by delegates for general discussion with no preparatory work. The result is that however useful our discussion may be, the conclusions at which we arrive are necessarily general. We shall request our Council to implement the Resolutions, but in many cases they will not be able to show us in a year's time any very specific results. I suggest that the Conference should become the parliament of the League, perhaps incorporating the A.G.M., so that we have one really representative annual gathering with power to act. That it should ask the Council to set up a Preparatory Committee to ensure that all matters to be discussed shall have been sufficiently prepared beforehand, so that it is possible for definite conclusions to be reached. Similarly, either this Committee or the Council itself should follow up the Conference decisions. At the Conference itself I believe that delegations would welcome more working time; though none of us like work, we don't like making long journeys to do something which we don't feel is fully effective. In that working time, too, it might be wise for arrangements to be made to delegate certain matters, especially those concerned with domestic policy, to sub-committees. It might also be possible to arrange that the Annual Meetings of Areas and Divisions became subsidiary conferences with power to act locally and recommend nationally. I realise too that in planning meetings more account needs to be taken of the times at which working folk, which we all are, can most easily attend.

That carries me on to the question of representation. At present we have a system whereby members in each county elect, usually by post, a county representative, and through these representatives the councillors from the various areas are elected. We want, I think, to strengthen the hands of those who work for us in the counties and the areas, and to do this we want to ensure

that these representatives attend the Conference, and that they are charged with the implementation in their own region of the decisions of the Conference. This in its turn, to be effective, may entail a revision of the means of election, so that members and member groups in each area take a more active part in the election, and thereby in the government of the League. In overhauling this machinery I am sure, too, that we need to arrange that those responsible for the Festivals are not, as at present, separately commissioned, but that the representation on county and festival committees is merged. I propose to put before the Council for submission to the next General Meeting, a constitutional reform on these lines. With this, I believe, should go a revision of the arrangements for executive work whereby the Council should be enabled to delegate to a small executive committee. This must include, of course, members representative of the various parts of the country, but must not impose upon any one of them too long a term on continuous service.

One of the chronic problems of a national body is the maintenance of proper contact between the centre and the local membership. I constantly hear people talking about "London," meaning the headquarters office, which they regard as being something like a miniature Whitehall. In order to counteract this most regrettable development, I have made it an immediate part of my own work to seek contact personally with the membership in as many parts of the country as possible, and I hope to go on doing that. But one person cannot, of course, maintain proper contact by himself, and I hope that everyone will make this a two-way traffic by making personal contact with the various members of the staff. Most of them are here at this Conference and eager to meet as many of you as possible.

Now I should like to pass in review some of the main activities of the League, in order that we may see together how we should like them to develop, and I hope that in the course of the week-end you will speak very freely about them. The Library now occupies a large proportion of the space in our rather awkward house, and has, for the moment at least, enough room. It has also a Librarian in Miss Garnham who has both long knowledge of its working and the combination of organising ability and scholarship which such a national institution demands. For I think it is fair to say that this Library is an institution unique in Britain and of very great service to the theatre. It has recovered from the difficulties caused by the enormous post-war expansion, occurring simultaneously with the shortage of experienced staff, and can offer proper service subject, of course, to the constant lack of adequate supplies of books. There is one respect, however, in which I believe that it can be very greatly strengthened. That is in the advice available to members on choice of play. I have already made one appointment with a view to strengthening this side of the work, and hope to build up within the Library a strong department devoted to this service. We ought to be able to offer a unique range of knowledge and

standard of taste in this matter, and I shall not rest until we are able to do so. I feel quite sure that although local libraries may have a real usefulness for their limited purpose, the work of the whole theatre would suffer were any attempt made to weaken the central library service.

Next I would say a few words about the Training Department. Here, under the uniquely able guidance of Miss Frances Mackenzie, the League has surely a great work to do in the future. With the development of the amateur theatre we have seen the immense need of instruction that is particularly fitted for amateur producers, actors and technicians, and the League's regular programme of Schools has become well consolidated. But in these things one must never stand still, and indeed I wish to see a big development of this department, for I think that the League can be most useful in the future as a provider of expert guidance and leadership. I hope that Miss Mackenzie, and her colleagues Frank Newman and Charles Thomas, will be able to go out increasingly to organise and staff courses for bodies all over the country; and that they will be able to explore the new avenues of dramatic creation which are opening up and lead people along them. For I am sure you will agree that one of the greatest dangers of amateur drama at the moment is self-satisfaction, which is death to any creative artist, whether he is at the top of the tree or at the bottom of it. Since the war a full-time course of training for people who intend to devote their lives wholly or largely to dramatic work among amateurs has been established at the League's Headquarters. This is a unique and admirable training, and you will be doing a service to both parties if you urge your local authority when appointing to posts in drama to make use of its students, and to send candidates through the course. I would urge you all to make use of the training department and to urge its use upon anyone who is arranging for instruction. I feel confident in claiming that its qualifications for this work are unrivalled.

Now I am coming on to the vexed question of Festivals. The One-Act Play Festival, I believe, has served its time as a Festival for members only. Many of the senior clubs no longer enter for it, being too busy with a programme of full-length plays, and most of the people who find value in the One-Act Play are those who are growing up in the production of drama. These are mostly working either with County Drama Committees and their advisers, or with local guilds, especially in the larger town. I believe there is room for a national One-Act Play Festival, drawing its entries not from Drama League members only, but from all practitioners of the One-Act play, and with its early rounds organised by the local bodies. The Festival Committee and the Council have in principle concurred in this view, and discussions have been held with representatives of the Standing Conference as a first step towards preparing a plan for this different kind of national festival. Those of us who are concerned would welcome the views of this Conference on the matter, as we have to proceed

quickly in order to get the scheme working in the coming winter. It is, I think, vital to the standard that the scheme should provide incentive for those senior teams, who show the less experienced what can be done and in what spirit to do it. We must offer them both a worth while job to do for the theatre in their district, and help in that improvement of their own work, which every keen company is always seeking.

This will involve something which I personally believe has now become highly desirable. That is, a minimising of the competitive element in the Festival. The purpose of the National Festival was always that of emulation rather than competition; that teams should see one another's work and should measure themselves against the common standard of what is artistically attainable under festival conditions. The Howard de Walden Cup was always meant to be a quite secondary consideration, and marks were meant to be a method of assessment rather than fuel for the flames of competitive animosity. Of recent years this has perhaps not always been the case, and some of the organisations which most sincerely seek to study and develop the art of the theatre have drawn away from the competitive festival for this reason. If the plan which I have suggested is to come to fruition we should probably abolish the marking system, except as a private guide for the adjudicator, and return to the kind of spirit which did, I think, to a much larger extent, animate the earlier festivals. That much-abused person, the Adjudicator, would have a different kind of job. He would choose companies to proceed from one round to the next, because they represented the achievement of their district or of their community, rather than because they were "the best." He would still, of course, be wrong for some people, but at least he could concentrate a little more on giving the companies help in their work, and could remind them of the highest standard instead of being bound to the standard of the best team of the evening.

The Full-Length Play Festival is still an experiment, and after two years' experience it needs reconsideration. What are the valuable things in it which we should try to preserve? The adjudication should provide a yardstick against which to measure one's work, though one does not have the chance to test it against that of other companies. A National Week which should be truly representative of the various kinds of dramatic work in this country, from Village to big city and from Service to Factory, might be an event of real importance and attract the attention which the two Festivals so far held have lacked.

One word in conclusion on this matter: I would suggest that we need to ask ourselves what standard we are really aiming at, for the usefulness of the Festival depends ultimately on that. It is, of course, impossible for the great majority of those who practise an art in their spare time to attain professional standards, but it is possible with sincerity, humility and care, to present a rightly chosen play with a truth and often with a freshness, which will give

the audience that artistic experience for which they come to the theatre. That this so seldom happens is due more than anything else, I believe, to complacency, and I believe that the right use of the Festival in a team's work is to suggest to them how far they have become insensitive, and how far they have allowed standards of easy success to lead them away from the standard of truth in the choice of their plays and the method of their acting.

The international side of our work is beginning to grow. This year the League has exercised the British Council's mandate to arrange exchanges between amateur companies by sponsoring a University team from Upsala, Sweden, in exchange with the Cambridge University A.D.C. Mr. Whitworth is attending the International Theatre Conference at Prague next month. Opportunity for further exchanges are in prospect and I shall be glad to know of British companies who are interested.

The League is acting for the Board of Trade in the issue of coupons for amateur productions. It has thus helped those companies who are building up a wardrobe with as much material as can be spared. Miss Doris Hutton has acted as Secretary of the Coupons Committee, and she is also Assistant Editor of DRAMA.

As I only assume Editorship with the Autumn Number, I have not much as yet to say about the magazine. My first number will be a domestic one, in which the League's membership will be able to read our proceedings here and plans for the future. Thereafter I shall be guided by the twin purposes of serving the League's 8,000 members in their own concerns, and of keeping them abreast of the progress of the whole theatre.

I conclude with a personal word, but one which in your several ways I am sure you will echo. My advent into Fitzroy Square has been made exceedingly pleasant by the friendly welcome given to me by the staff. Miss Frances Briggs is a friend to you all, and you all have drawn upon her great knowledge and wise advice, as I have often done myself in the past. But it is no easy matter to introduce a new Director to his job: and this she is doing in so effective a manner that, like Moses, I feel my hands upheld. They are supported, too, by the whole staff, and I can assure you that your servants at 9 Fitzroy Square are united in desire, indeed in determination, to make the League as effective as possible. Like good Britons, you often grumble at your own institution: but we hope you will regard it more and more as your own, and us as the instruments for serving your best interests. As conditions permit, we are giving the League's home a more welcoming appearance, and we can assure you that, whether in person, or by post or telephone (which also we are trying to improve) you will find a friendly hearing in any of its rooms. May I sum all this up by asking you to join with me in making the name express the truth: that we are leagued together for the development of the art of the theatre.

# PLAYS IN PERFORMANCE

by Philip Hope-Wallace

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THE London scene presents a kaleidoscopic appearance at this time of the year, especially if to the seasonal condition be added a mild slump. Nothing seems to dislodge the really long-runners, though some of them are almost unbelievably fatigued, have suffered wholesale changes of cast and in general are so seedy that the bewildered visitor to London may well wonder why the critics hailed them. Apart from them the tide is with the musicals, the dancers, the tricksters, the funsters, especially those lucky enough to have transatlantic labels. But except for one American prize-winning play, *All My Sons*, at the Globe, the cluster of decent new plays is actually fifty per cent. British. Count out Sartre at Hammersmith for the moment, and the best farcical comedy (Yvonne Arnaud in *Traveller's Joy*), the best intellectual thriller (*The Gioconda Smile*), the best frank fiction drama (*The Paragon*) are all British.

*All My Sons*, by Arthur Miller, is one of those well-put-together plays with a strong moral argument (too strong for some tastes—there is something unpleasantly smug and preachy about certain speeches in this play), but it has a technical assurance, a sense of the popular appeal of dramatised “living issue” which reminds me of Lillian Hellman at her best. There are no loose ends; the drama is well brought home to the family whom we learn to know on its own back porch. Joseph Calleia (Malta born, it is said, although it is for his brilliant small part playing in American films that we remember him over here) is the “hero” who let commercial instinct during the war get the better of his patriotism. He allowed defective aircraft parts to pass out of his factory and thus indirectly contributed to the death of twenty-one airmen and—the drama is perhaps truly measured by this—his own son. The second son, and the play’s action, bring home to this man the enormity of his crime against “all my sons.” The obvious criticism is that though well made the play is not big enough for its theme—that is to say it involves us in emotional expenditure for too little return. The conversion of this fundamentally uninteresting and unimportant man is of too little consequence; whether he lives on or kills himself matters less than it should. One comes away with a sense of having been slightly cheated. To tackle such themes you need to be a poet; the play could be material for an Eliot or an Ibsen; but on this level it is merely an exciting “inquest revelation.” well worked out and very competently acted as drama. Unlike so many American plays brought to the West End this one had the “feel” of America about it perhaps because two of the principals had real American voices. As the son, Richard Leech is excellent.

A father-son motive also cropped up in the stagey but effective drama *The Paragon*, written by Pertwee *père et fils*. A measure of the play's purely theatrical holding-power was that one accepted the rather tiresome premises without demur. A self-made man, a father, is blind; he thinks his son dies a hero on D Day, and just as he is antagonising local opinion by building him a Shrine, in the shape of a cricket pavilion, the hero actually turns up, not dead at all but a deserter on the run, and a murderer, too. The dramatic development consists largely in the father's slow realisation of how things are, the denouement being a fight to the death between father and son in a room darkened to equalise the odds! The play acts with a pleasing professional ease; Hugh Burden, Walter Fitzgerald, Rachel Kempson and Elizabeth Kentish, and others do excellently in a good honest bit of theatre which has given the little Fortune Theatre its first turn of good luck for some time. It is not a great play, but it is the sort that the theatre ultimately cannot get along without.

*The Gioconda Smile* is a superior drama in the sense that it is the work of a superior mind; as a bit of play-making no doubt many a thriller could give it points (indeed the final *coup de théâtre*—advancing the hands of the clock by one hour—is as old as Drury Lane), but it holds attention because the arguments and language are, as too rarely in our theatre, addressed to an adult mind. Originally it was a stinging good short story of a sexually frustrated spinster who sent to the gallows the innocent aesthete who made the mistake of admiring her only for her mind. It dates from Huxley's brilliant and sour period but the play being new has to accommodate a good deal of clap-trap on the new Huxleyian doctrines of acceptance, relaxation and so on. The result is that in a very decently made-up, superior and adult thriller there are great lumps of only fairly interesting sermonising. The women are specially well cast. Pamela Brown gives a hard hitting performance of a woman scorned and going mad; Brenda Bruce, as the little goose whom the man married instead, lets a natural pathos come out strongly and easily. Marie Ney has some good moments as a spiteful and genteel nurse whose tongue springs the plot. That good actor Noel Howlett is the doctor (a chorus) and Clive Brook is more or less satisfactory as the man—but one feels we lack the right actor for this sort of heavy hero.

Sartre is a much better stage craftsman than Huxley—even if his ultimate message is less likely to appeal to the matinee audiences. *Crime Passionnel* is surely his best play so far, an admirable study enveloped in a flash-back case, of a communist Hamlet who cannot bring himself to shoot the party boss ere he deviates from the party line. This young bourgeois idealist is undone by thought, and feels his fanaticism waver under the impact of the wiser, tougher, elder man's arguments for expediency. An admirable battle ensues, for the boss has seen what the young man's game is, yet feels he can control the situation. In the event it is the young man's wife who springs the trigger—



*Above : Pamela Brown and Noel Howlett in "The Gioconda Smile."*

*Below : Michael Gough and Roger Livesey in "Crime Passionel."*

indirectly. For having transferred her admiration from her husband to the boss and having inveigled the boss into her arms, she is there surprised by the would-be murderer who now feels not so much that his sexual life as his idealism is attacked—and suddenly feels free to shoot. So it is *crime passionnel* and not the intended assassination. The play's tail has an ironical sting; the party line has changed and the murdered boss is now canonised so that it is the assassin who is the party enemy; already we hear vengeance knocking at the gate.

All this is steeped in politics and discussion of the rights and wrongs of murder to an extent that may horrify and baffle the kind of audience who finds even Dodie Smith a little stark, but even its most intellectual flights are managed with a consummate sense of acting possibilities. Perhaps one should say *French* acting possibilities for the piece stems clearly enough from the theatre of Paris; the note is always eloquent. The tirade, the explicit phrase, the cumulative excitement of verbiage put some strain on English actors, many of whom fight shy of any play with a speech above a dozen words long in it. Michael Gough, Roger Livesey do well, Joyce Redman (the wife) very well and Peter Glenville produces with the split-second timing needed for a thriller, even if it is a sermonising thriller. Sartre's play is impressive, as Huxley's is not; but in retrospect, both seem to lack poetry and "heart."

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## DRAMA SCHOOLS IN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

by B. Iden Payne

THE prevalence of drama departments in American universities is, naturally enough, regarded in England with a good deal of curiosity, sometimes sceptical and sometimes envious. It should therefore be of interest to readers of *DRAMA* to have some account from first-hand observation of their genesis, development, achievements and present tendencies.

In the first place it is important to remember that American colleges are, for the most part, institutions primarily concerned with vocational training. It is that purpose which drama departments are intended to subserve. When many of them were founded, the decay of stock companies had reached such a point that they no longer afforded training grounds as they had done in the past, and it was the intention of the founders of drama departments to fill the vacuum. Nevertheless it was through literary channels that they received the impetus which brought them into being.

America, though more belatedly even than England, was affected by the new theatre of social criticism, inaugurated by Ibsen, which brought literature back to the theatre after its long sojourn in the Victorian doldrums. When Ibsen and his successors strolled into a university lecture-room, the whole theatre crowded in behind them. Before it could be turned out of doors, it had taken possession of a department.

It was at Harvard University that a professor of English, George Pierce Baker, who happened to be also an enthusiast for everything pertaining to the drama, first set the door ajar for the intrusion of the theatre. Professor Baker's lectures on playwriting had been immensely popular (and fruitful as well, for Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Howard, and S. N. Behrman were among his students), but he soon discovered that apprentice playwrights, if they were fully to develop their capacity could not be divorced from the stage itself. Consequently he established, in 1912, a small laboratory theatre in which his students could bring their plays to the test of performance. This experimental theatre was not supported by university funds—it was indeed regarded with disfavour by the university authorities, but the attention it received inspired Yale University to establish its now celebrated Drama School, with Professor Baker as its first head.

At the University of North Dakota, and subsequently at the University of North Carolina, Professor Frederick H. Koch, following the example of Professor Baker, established experimental theatres, in which he himself produced his students' plays. Professor Koch's *Carolina Playmakers* fostered the talents of many southern dramatists whose work included a notable output of plays dealing with the folk life of their own and contiguous states. Paul Green, author of *In Abraham's Bosom*, is the best known member of this group.

But, though the Harvard-into-Yale and the North Carolina experiments ultimately developed into full-fledged schools of drama, they were not the first in the field. That honour went to a younger institution, the Carnegie Institute of Technology, in Pittsburgh, which opened its Drama School in 1914. This school did not concentrate on playwriting, but offered a comprehensive training in every department of the theatre. Moreover, the four year course included sufficient academic subjects to meet the state educational authorities' requirements for granting a Bachelor of Arts degree. After the second year in the school the students had the choice, according to their individual talents and the advice of the faculty, of majoring either in acting, production, or playwriting. The validity of this plan can be gauged from the fact that it has been generally followed by colleges in every state in the union, whose students are scattered over the country as actors, both in the legitimate theatre and in the moving picture industry, as scene designers, as directors of Little Theatres, as radio experts, and recently, as pioneers in television.

In the thirty-four years since Carnegie Tech opened its doors, more than

twice that number of well staffed and well equipped Drama Schools have been founded, some of them with two theatres, a large one for plays of general appeal, and a small one for experimental productions. But there is an element of paradox about this amazing growth, notable even in a country which specializes in amazing growth, for during this period there has been a rapid dwindling of the number of engagements available to professional actors. It has recently been revealed by the Actors Equity Association, which embraces practically the whole theatrical profession, that at the present time 92 per cent. of their members are unemployed. Professional stock companies, once so flourishing, have all but disappeared from the American scene, and touring companies, though not quite such rarities as they were in the recent past, are still probably less than one twentieth of the number there were when Carnegie Tech began operations. How then, it may well be asked, are the many graduates who are annually thrown out upon their own resources absorbed into the community? An answer has been partially given above. A fair proportion find employment as directors and technicians in Community and Little Theatres, institutions of which there is no counterpart in England. These theatres, with unpaid actors, bring out productions (for the most part very well mounted) about every four weeks, except during the heat of the summer, and give from four performances to short runs of a fortnight or three weeks, according to the size of the community in which they are functioning. Although the trend is snail-slow in manifesting itself, there is some indication of a development of professionalism for actors as well as for the technical staff.

Radio, as wireless is known in America, has grown into a vast industry with literally hundreds of broadcasting stations covering the whole country. This proliferation has been made possible because the stations are commercial undertakings from which advertisers, local as well as national concerns, "buy time." Much of the alleged entertainment so sponsored and promulgated is dramatic in presentation, and in this sad substitute for true acting the invention of radio has given employment to thousands of young men and women whom the commercial theatre could not have absorbed. However depressing it may be to see talent diverted to such infantile expression as is generally provided, the fact remains that stage experience at drama schools gives invaluable training in vocal projection and the use of the voice generally which can frequently find highly paid use in broadcasting. Consequently the teaching of radio techniques has of late been given more and more prominence. In some universities it actually forms a separate department. In the University of Texas, where this dichotomy is so far only partial, there are already as many students majoring in radio as there are students majoring in drama! In some universities, the State University of Iowa, for example, radio stations are run by the departments, and broadcast programmes daily from 8.00 a.m. to 10.00 p.m.

And now television. Remembering what has been written above about the

vocational training purpose of these departments, it is not surprising that several of them have already instituted courses in this new field. For lack of equipment, most of these courses are so far mainly theoretical, but a few universities, notably Western Reserve, in Cleveland, have received large grants and have set up the necessary machinery for practical demonstrations.

Perhaps the most astonishing, as it was certainly the most unexpected, result of the establishment of drama schools has been the discovery that an apparently unlimited number of their graduates can be absorbed in the school system of the country. A Drama School graduate, because he has a special ability to project, and also because he brings with him a welcome breath of the theatre, is usually successful as a teacher of English. And as American High Schools go in for dramatic productions, an English teacher who can produce a play is reasonably sure of being able to secure a job that will pay him a living wage, and guarantee his economic security in the future.

In the intensely interesting experiment in dramatic training afforded by these university drama departments, it must be admitted that there is growing up a slight danger of a too academic approach to the technical work. This has probably been rendered inevitable because of the very size and extent of the movement. In order to find teachers for all the courses, it has been necessary to compose the faculties of the new departments that are constantly springing up from the graduates of the older drama departments, many of which now offer master's degrees. And the higher the degree, the higher the salary that is likely to be commanded! It is a pity that, in many instances, the teachers in dramatic departments have had little contact with the living theatre except in the colleges where they have studied, and so are inclined to treat even their technical work academically. For this reason it is a very hopeful sign that several universities are beginning to take their plays away from their own theatres to town in surrounding territories. A recent notable development of this kind has been instituted by the University of Washington in Seattle. (I refer to the State University of Washington, in the north-west, which must not be confused by English readers with Washington, the federal capital, in the District of Columbia.) This department owns a heavy truck for the scenery and costumes, with a trailer-bus for the company attached, and is now sending out a company of their own graduates which travels from town to town, playing generally in the auditoriums of the High Schools. They carry two productions, so that they can give afternoon and evening performances of different plays. Last year they toured *Macbeth* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, visiting small towns in every part of the state. Incidentally, the Drama Department of the University of Washington is unique in possessing two very unusual theatres, both of which are occupied by their own productions for fifty-two weeks in the year, every production running for six weeks. One of these theatres is built on the model of a Mississippi show-boat, and is moored to

the bank of Puget Sound, on which Seattle is situated. The other, called the Penthouse Theatre, is constructed for performances "In The Round." That is to say, the seats are arranged around the stage, which therefore acquires something of the character of a circus. This theatre is largely used for comedies, the more serious productions being given in the Show-Boat.

To return to the value of touring the university productions. It is probably not realised in England that millions of the inhabitants of the United States have never witnessed a single performance of a flesh and blood play, so entirely have they been dependent upon the motion pictures. In the course of the war, however, thousands of American boys who knew nothing of the theatre were introduced to it by ENSA and USO companies, and yielded to its enchantment. Demobilized, these young men aroused the curiosity of their parents and families. There is, therefore, a large potential audience waiting to be aroused to the lure of the legitimate theatre. It seems not unlikely that in carrying the light of the living drama to regions where it had been extinguished, university dramatic departments are making one of their most important contributions to the cultural life of America.

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## "FACE ANSWERETH TO FACE"

*by Kenneth Rawlings*

NO one who wishes to understand the signs of the times can afford to overlook the remarkable growth of amateur or Community drama during the last quarter of a century. Has this intense and widespread devotion to the art of the theatre any deep significance for us who live in these troubled times?

In most periods of history the drama has had an important position in the life of civilised communities, but never before, at any rate in modern times, has it filled so large a place in the common life as it does to-day. In towns and villages, in schools and colleges and churches and youth centres, in factories and Government departments, in prisons and in concentration camps, indoors and out of doors people of every kind gather together day after day and, if not always with discretion, at all events with unconquerable valour essay the exacting and exhausting task of performing plays. Is it just a craze which sooner or later will pass? Or is it a sort of escapism? May it be that the world of reality in which we live is becoming so intolerable that we are fain to take refuge in make-believe? Or is it that in a world which seems to be going completely mad we find relief in the essential sanity of the stage where if

madness is sometimes portrayed it is at least presented as abnormality and not as sober sense or realism or high diplomacy? Or is it that in this over-mechanized civilisation we feel that the theatre stands pre-eminently for that sphere of life in which the human spirit can still express itself freely and spontaneously in forms which cannot be scientifically predicted or reduced to mathematical formulae?

All this, it may be, has something to do with it, but I believe there is another factor which is neither escapism nor reaction. Because drama is concerned primarily with man and man's problems do we not feel that it may have some special and perhaps unique contribution to make towards the solution of our supreme and most urgent problem in this generation, which is how to save humanity from destroying itself? Surely it is becoming increasingly clear to everyone that if mankind is not to destroy itself it must learn to know itself afresh. A deeper and wider understanding of humanity is the one indispensable condition of the survival of humanity.

We are confronted to-day by the formidable necessity of reconstructing the whole fabric of our shattered society, shattered not only by wars, but by the disintegration and collapse of our former philosophies. How can we rebuild our world upon secure foundations unless we understand the material we have to use—the raw material of human nature? I need not labour the point: it is a truism that mankind as a whole must learn to live as one family or cease to live at all, and there can be no true family life without mutual understanding among all its members. I am convinced that the main obstacle to human fellowship and the co-operative society we are seeking is not sin but lack of understanding.

To say this is, I know, to challenge the orthodox religious view. It is constantly urged from Christian pulpits and platforms that it is the corruption if not the total depravity, of human nature that is responsible for all the ills of mankind, social as well as personal and individual. We are told that until by the grace of God selfishness and pride and greed and the lust for power are purged from men's hearts the human race must continue to groan under tyrannies and cruelties and wars.

Well, but man's depravity is no new thing: it is certainly no greater to-day than in past ages. Yet there have been civilisations in the past in which, despite many social evils and many abominations, men have somehow managed to live together co-operatively in their own particular communities without finding it necessary to resort to mutual extermination. If then communities of sinful men have been able to live tolerably and in peace in spite of their sins there seems to be no reason why the whole community should not learn to do the same. The new factor in this age is not an increase of wickedness but an extension of human interdependence calling for a new spirit of understanding and tolerance.

I do not for one moment deny that the full and final remedy for all the diseases of mankind—for all violence and hatred and social disruption, is the grace of God; but the healing power of Divine grace is not restricted to supernatural channels, it operates not only in the sacraments of the Church and the preaching of the Gospel, but also in the strengthening and enlightenment of men's natural faculties of intelligence and reason and, above all, through the enlarging and quickening of their sympathies. If there is one thing I have learned from a fairly long experience it is that you cannot make bad people good merely by exhorting them or preaching to them, still less by preaching at them. But I have known many sinners turned to righteousness through the warm touch of human sympathy and compassion from a fellow man eager to understand rather than to condemn. It can be said without contradiction that the first necessary step in dealing with any sort of evil in the life of an individual person or of society is to understand the cause of it and the circumstances which produce and perpetuate it.

It is because the art of the Theatre, more effectively, perhaps, than any other human activity makes for the understanding of the nature of man that I believe it to be one of the greatest spiritual assets in the world's life to-day. And I think that this belief is shared, though not always consciously, by most of those who are engaged in dramatic work for the love of it and not, or not only, as a means of livelihood.

There are many earnest people who value the drama chiefly as a means of teaching moral or religious principles, and no doubt it may serve that purpose very effectively. But I am sure that the essential function of the theatre is not so much didactic as illuminative. Its task is not to spread propaganda but to spread light. This it does by helping us to penetrate the obscurities of human character and emotions and to perceive the hidden motives which inspire men's otherwise unaccountable behaviour.

In the theatre we begin first of all to get a better understanding of ourselves. We see ourselves objectively. We identify ourselves with the characters represented on the stage and gain thereby something of that power to see ourselves as others see us which is at the root of all social behaviour. Even though the play we witness contains no obvious or intentional moral lesson, it may, nevertheless have a profoundly moral effect on us by showing how our own unreflecting habits or unexamined beliefs may have very evil results in our own lives or in the lives of others. There must, I think, be many people to whom the tragedies of drama have brought moments of self-revelation, in which they have said to themselves "There, but for the grace of God, go I." And when nobility of character and the grandeur of humanity are represented on the stage—would they were represented more often!—there must be some who, not content to wonder and admire, are moved to say "That, by the grace of God, I can and will become."

I am far from suggesting that all, or even most, of the plays we see on the stage are true to the realities of experience or authentic in their interpretation of human life and character. But the quality of our plays, as of most other things in this world, is subject to the law of demand and supply. If we want great drama and are worthy of it, we shall get it. I for one believe that the Community Drama movement is powerful enough to bring about a renaissance in the art of playwriting. If we will cultivate our critical faculties and, rejecting shallow and meretricious rubbish, devote ourselves to all that is best in modern and classical drama we shall find that many more writers with imagination and genius will be proud to devote their gifts to the service of the theatre to their own great benefit and ours.

Let me say lastly that those of us who with serious purpose are engaged in the most human and humanising of the arts ought to achieve within the microcosm of our own group or society that understanding and sympathy, that mutual tolerance and unselfish co-operation which, as I have said, the whole society of mankind must achieve if it is to escape disaster. I know one amateur theatre, and there must be many more, where this spirit of co-operative fellowship reigns and is perceptible even to strangers. There is peace within its walls, if not always plenteousness within its palaces. Wide differences of education and social status and religious and political belief exist and are frankly accepted. No one pretends that they are not there, but no one resents them. The whole atmosphere of the place is fatal to any sort of intolerance or exclusiveness. And the egotism which is in every artist, and in every human being for that matter, finds its proper outlet and exercise not in conceit or jealousy, but in a desire to give of one's best in the service of the theatre and its audience.

I maintain that any human activity which produces such fruits is essentially religious in character. I maintain further that all plays written with sincerity and artistic integrity are essentially religious plays, whether they are on the Religious Drama Society's list or not, and that such a play as *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, which I believe is on that list, contains more religion than many sermons I have heard. I will even dare to say that in some theatres I have found more of the Spirit of Christ than in some churches.

"*As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.*" This is the glory of the drama, that it brings man face to face with himself and with humanity. And as he gazes, if only he will gaze steadfastly enough, he will see more than man. He will see the faint reflection of the Divine image in which all men are created, which can never be altogether destroyed, and which was once manifested on earth in its completeness in the person of the one ideal and perfect Man, Jesus Christ our Lord.

*The foregoing was delivered in Brighton Parish Church on the occasion of the League's Annual Conference, May 30th, 1948, by the Hon. Director of the Lewes Little Theatre.*

# THE EDITOR'S PAGE

## "DRAMA"

THE next number of DRAMA will be printed on a better paper than this one, enabling us to give proper reproduction of photographs and so to increase the number of illustrations. The cost will thereby be increased, and this, together with other rising costs, necessitates raising the price to the public to 1s. 6d. We feel confident that the better value we can give will repay the purchaser: members of the League will get it free of charge.

We hope to offer in succeeding numbers a series of articles which will help to solve the problem of Choice of Play. A balanced survey of the best and most distinctive plays, old or new, will be given in various categories. Mr. A. H. Wharrier has undertaken to start with a short series on the One-Act Play. Notices of individual new plays will still be published. Book reviews will be grouped to provide opportunity for comparison between treatments of the same subject.

In surveying the work of Amateurs we hope to include in each issue an account of what goes on in a particular district: next time it will be Devon. When readers send us accounts of their doings, they should remember that we want an objective view: what the producer said about his own show is not admissible evidence. We want to show amateurs what their work is worth in relation to the whole work of the theatre, and only an objective account can help us to do this.

## ONE-ACT PLAY FESTIVAL

The retiring Editor was able in his last number to celebrate the certainty that his work of many years will bear fruit and we shall have a National Theatre. In the amateur theatre, the League should equally take a national point of view. The work of every Society can contribute something individual to a national whole. On this conviction are based the two plans for exhibiting that work which are now coming into effect. The Community Theatre Festival is becoming a festival of the one-act play for all amateur groups, based on the local festival in which the dramatic life of the country or town is concentrated. It is being organised in two stages: Stage One, the locally run festival, which may be the responsibility of a B.D.L. Committee or may be controlled by an affiliated county committee or guild: Stage Two, the later rounds operated by the League.

The competitive element in this festival will be less than before. Some people believe that this will lower the standard which competition alone keeps up. Others have seen a tendency in competition to breed mediocrity, and believe that the really imaginative work of amateurs is done where the play, not the cup, is the thing. However that may be, those who have seen the work that goes on quietly in local festivals, and the audiences which are there attracted to take their true place as part of the show, want to see that work shown as part of the representation of national amateur drama; and want also to give those companies the benefit of contact with others outside their own locality.

The plan is being worked out by a Joint Committee of the League and the Standing Conference of Drama Associations, which federates the County Drama Committees. It has been accepted by the Council of the League on a "permissive" basis: that is, where a local festival under the League is strong, it can be kept in being for those companies which feel more at home in it. The aim is to establish a true spirit of co-operation between the League and the other bodies, especially the County Committees and Theatre Guilds, and to let the festival arrangements develop from and in that spirit.

## NATIONAL DRAMA WEEK

In place of the Full-length Play Festival, which the Council has decided to suspend for this season, a great new experiment is being launched. National Drama Week will combine the Annual Conference, a Theatre Exhibition and many theatrical and social events, with the performance by six amateur companies, invited by the Council, of work representing the highest achievements in various fields of amateur drama. Further details of this week at a beautiful Spa will be published shortly. Meanwhile, book the date: May 21st—28th at Harrogate.

We welcome the formation of the Society for Theatre Research. The chairman is Miss M. St. Clair Byrne, who recently organised the admirable Exhibition of Shakespeare Production for display in London and Moscow. The Society aims at making available the wealth of material in this country on the history and practice of the theatre in all periods, both in London and in the provinces. Its researches will be closely related to the living theatre of to-day. The subscription of two guineas includes the quarterly *Theatre Notebook*, an annual volume of *Transactions*, and admission with a guest to monthly meetings. Corporate bodies are eligible for membership. The Hon Secretary's address is 7, Ashburnham Mansions, S.W.10.

The sudden death of Consuelo de Reyes leaves us the poorer of a vivid personality and a passionate theatre-lover. She will be remembered as hostess of Citizen House, Bath, by the hundreds who have attended its shows and Drama Schools and shared its atmosphere of imaginative enthusiasm. The dramatic work which gradually absorbed most of her time was begun by Miss de Reyes with Miss Helen Hope before the First World War, as one of the activities of a recreational centre. Notable in its programme was the use of folk-drama and folk-music, and many will remember the delighted surprise with which they discovered these shows, then unique. This work was closely linked with the League since its foundation, and we mourn as we honour a warm-hearted and courageous friend. "I never look back," said Miss de Reyes when the fire had destroyed the first Citizen House. We can be sure that the saying is still true.

We congratulate our old and valued friend and contributor, Mr. F. Sladen-Smith, on being the first man to be honoured by a University for work in amateur Drama. Manchester University, in conferring on him an Honorary M.A., has recognised his indomitable stand for the highest artistic values throughout the years of his directorship of the Unnamed Society. This recognition is indeed due, not only from his native city but from all theatre-lovers. The programme of his latest production is one more proof of his enterprise and taste—a new play, *The Marriage of Hamlet*, translated from the French of Jean Sarmant.

Another University event of note is the first Masque to be presented to Royalty for 300 years, *The Masque of Hope* staged by the O.U.D.S. for Princess Elizabeth. Specially written by Nevill Coghill, it is printed in the best manner of the Oxford University Press (jr.) for those who were not fortunate enough to witness it. One of those who was describes how moving he found Saint George's final address to the Royal Lady, concluding with the release of 200 pigeons and "all the bells of Oxford":

"Wherever the bright sun of Heaven  
shall shine  
Her honour and the greatness of her  
name  
Shall be, and make new Nations; she  
shall flourish,  
And, like the mountain cedar, reach her  
branches  
To all the plains about her. Your children's children  
Shall see this, and bless Heaven."

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

## INTERNATIONAL THEATRE INSTITUTE

THE International Theatre Institute, promised last year by UNESCO, held its first Conference at Prague from Monday, June 28th, to the end of the week. Delegations were sent by nine nations: Australia, Canada, China, France, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the Union of South Africa, while the International Federation of Amateur Theatres was represented by an Observer in the person of the present writer. There were fifty-three delegates in all, among whom from Britain were J. B. Priestley (President), Tyrone Guthrie, Mrs. Hawkes, Kenneth Rae (secretary of the British Centre), Llewellyn Rees, and Stephen Thomas.

The Sub-Committees as appointed at the first meeting presented their reports (on tours, organisation and information) at the final plenary session. With a few minor modifications they were unanimously accepted. For the time being the Central Institute will be accommodated by UNESCO at Paris, although the I.T.I. will be a wholly independent body. This central institute will act as a clearing house for the information sent in by the National Centres. These will have the duty of organising tours, on an exchange basis wherever practical, and of obtaining and disseminating all kinds of information about the Theatre in their respective countries. A monthly bulletin will be issued and later on, perhaps, a more ambitious international magazine of the Theatre.

Although during the first year at any rate substantial financial aid may be expected, from UNESCO in so far as the Central Institute is concerned, the National Centres will have to look after themselves, so that the ultimate success of the venture must depend on the extent to which National Centres can find funds and suitable *personnel* to carry out these obligations. Each centre will of course be autonomous, and their obligations for the first year have been reduced to a minimum. Nevertheless, they must at once show signs of activity, and by the time of the next Conference something very practical must have been achieved if the scheme is to gain the confidence of these for whose benefit it is primarily intended to act.

It may be said at once that everyone at Prague was convinced that the I.T.I. has much useful work to do. There was a conspicuous absence of half-heartedness or cynicism. Mr. Maurice Kurtz, the I.T.I.'s indefatigable General Secretary, may well feel satisfied with its launching on what should prove a prosperous voyage. As already mentioned, Mr. Kenneth Rae is the Secretary of the British Centre, and its address is 9 St. Martin's Court, London, W.C.2.

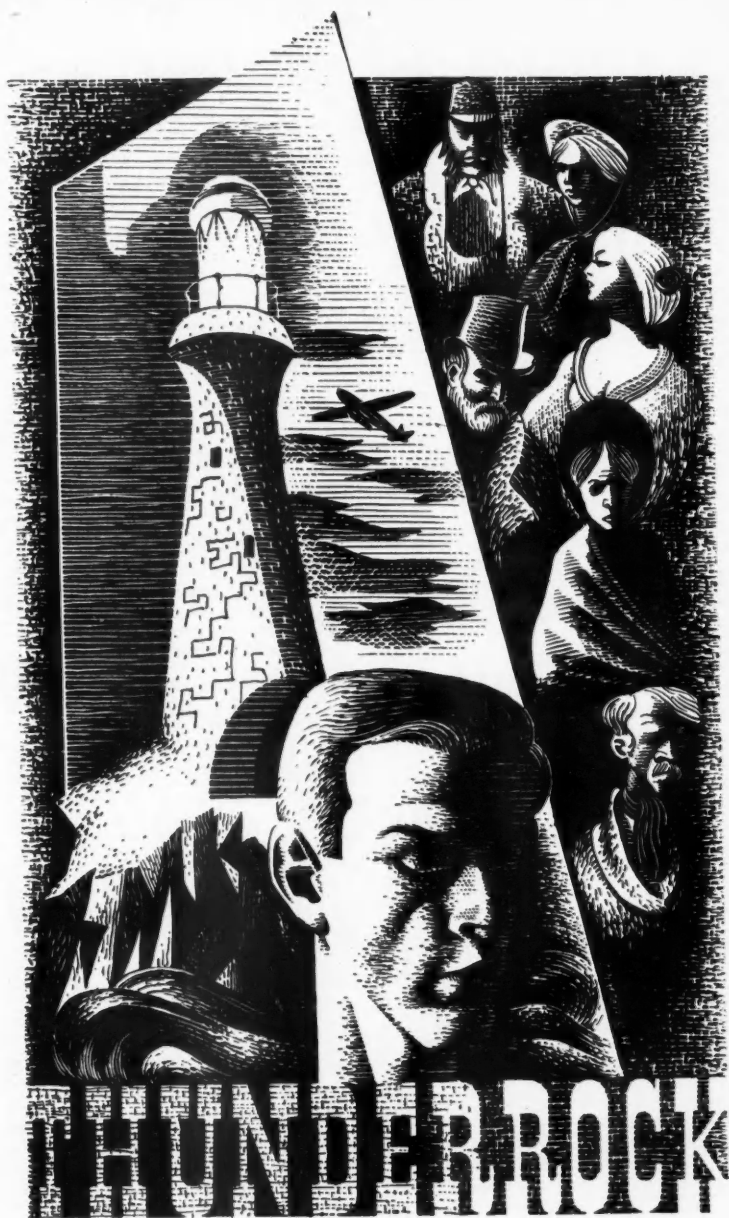
In addition to those who composed the British delegation, it was pleasant to meet several others who are either members of the Drama League, or well known in League circles. Such were S.I. Hsiung, Mrs. Nancy Yang Kuo, Miss Rosamond Gilder, Leonard Schach and Maurice Huisman, whose war-time company of amateur players, well known as Les Routiers, have now become the professional company of the National Theatre of Belgium.

The City of Prague lavished a wonderful hospitality upon the Conference, not only by a series of receptions and free visits to theatres, but by simply being Prague. The lovely situation of the city, set on either bank of the broad Vltava river, with its castle on the hill, and its many superb examples of Baroque architecture, both secular and ecclesiastical, provided an unforgettable picture. One prays that the day may soon come when these glories will again be available to the tourists as well as to those who can only enter the country from England if on business bent.

GEOFFREY WHITWORTH

## INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGES

In May the *Upsala Studentteater* paid a visit to this country under the International Exchange scheme which exists between the British Drama League and the British Council. The play they chose was Strindberg's *Easter*, which they performed in English at Bedford College, London, Bristol University and Cambridge University Amateur Dramatic Club. At Cambridge they also played one performance in Swedish. The A.D.C. had previously given performances of Shaw's *You Never Can Tell*, in Sweden. This summer the O.U.D.S. takes its Ben Johnson play to France, also under League auspices.



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 2nd, 1948

Dear Sir,

I was most interested to read in *DRAMA* about Group playwriting by adults, and think readers may be also interested in the playmaking which during the past three years has been one of the most enjoyable pastimes of the girls at our school.

At first, it was the younger and the retarded children who created plays most spontaneously. The older girls preferred to read plays; but discussing them they found few were really satisfactory: those that attracted them were plays about children their own age, with plenty of action and adventure. So we began making up our own plays. Different forms tackled the job in different ways, although the basis was always the same. First, form discussion on such topics as "A lonely wood," "Dartmoor" and so on. The children then moved into groups of about half a dozen, elected leaders, worked out the plot, then told the story to the others and answered or accepted frank criticism.

Next came production. In one room, seven or eight groups of eager actors would set to work, completely oblivious of the rest of the world. At first they wanted help, but they were told, "Try it. See whether it works out." Now, they hardly ever ask for suggestions. The first-years enjoyed acting so much that they tried to make their plays last as long as possible, so we had just a series of scenes with no dramatic point. It became necessary to begin with a suggested climax, and then decide to whom it would happen, why, where, and when. Certain noticeable features emerged. First: the almost unvarying sequence of themes. Second: the close relationship between these themes and the children's own lives. Third: the influence of the cinema; it is most difficult to get unity of time or place. The more intelligent children work hard to perfect their ideas. The backward children like to act their little plays over and over, without any attempt at improvement.

The value of this work is obvious to anyone who has watched its development. It is among the retarded children that the results are most heartening, but there are few who have not derived some benefit in self-assurance, poise, team spirit, and the joy of creating. Now, the problem is to keep pace with all the home-made productions throughout the school.

Yours faithfully,

E. M. Rickwood

Sincil Bank Secondary Modern School,  
Lincoln.

Dear Sir,

It is not easy to see how Mr. Priestley can effectively defend himself against Mr. St. John Ervine's venomous attack.

If anyone calls you a prig and a bore and a prating coxcomb, what can you say except to murmur that you hope you are not?

Allow me to say therefore that to me, and I think to many others in the Community Drama movement, Mr. Priestley is one of the major prophets of the theatre, and has perhaps done more than any man living—certainly more than Mr. St. John Ervine, to establish the drama in the affections of the common man.

Incidentally the question propounded by Mr. St. John Ervine in reply to "puerile outcries against the star-system" seems to me much more puerile in its stupidity. He asks whether we would choose to see a play with Miss Edith Evans and Sir Laurence Olivier in the leading parts, or with their understudies. The answer is, of course, that it all depends on the play. "I would not walk across the road," wrote John Drinkwater, "to see the ablest actor in the world wasting his talents on a worthless play." I am not suggesting that these fine artists do thus waste their talents, but surely Mr. St. John Ervine knows that the curse of the star-system is that it enables the writers of trash to get away with it.

Yours, etc.,

Kenneth Rawlings

St. Michael's Rectory,  
Lewes, Sussex.

## PICTORIAL CHARTS

The University of London Press have recently published a very interesting set of charts entitled *The Changing Theatre*, illustrating the Greek, Elizabethan, Renaissance, Victorian and Modern periods, with a short history of each. Attractively printed in two colours and measuring about 30 in. by 40 in., the set of three charts costs 15s. 6d.

## "WE WANT TO DO NEW PLAYS"

The W.E.A. Student Players, Southampton, want to do a new play of merit, with no more than six major men's parts and any number of female parts. Authors should communicate with Miss Eileen Saunders, 90 Newlands Avenue, Shirley, Southampton, mentioning *DRAMA*.

## FESTIVALS OF ARTS

RECORD-breaking attendances at this year's Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-upon-Avon caused the Memorial Theatre Governors to extend the season which opened on the 15th April, until October 30th. This 1948 season is the last under the direction of Sir Barry Jackson, and sets the seal of success upon his three years' work at Stratford.

In most of this year's productions emphasis has been laid upon a flowing continuity of action, with stage decor based upon permanent or semi-permanent settings. Whilst the full resources of the theatre's stage lighting have been used most imaginatively to the full, the other mechanics of the theatre have been utilised little. The scenery and costumes by Audrey Cruddas present highly coloured pictures for *King John*. *Hamlet* is this year's Birthday Play, also produced by Michael Benthall, with scenery and costumes by James Bailey in the Victorian period. It is all very opulent and beautiful to look at, and playgoers who "collect" "Hamlets" are having the opportunity of seeing both Paul Schofield and Robert Helpmann play the part.

Michael Benthall's conception of *The Shrew* is original and brilliant in execution, with Diana Wynyard as the "shrewiest" of Katherines. The pace is breathtaking, and the laughs are continuous, if at times somewhat false. This production is likely to incite the most controversy of the whole repertoire. To quote the producer's own words, "the success of farce depends not on scenic effects but on development of character and situation, therefore the actors are given only as much pictorial help as the Elizabethans had." *The Winter's Tale* introduces to Stratford Anthony Quayle, Director designate, as producer. The barbaric emphasis laid upon the Sicilian scenes is well contrasted by the rustic beauty of Bohemia in both costume and decor by Motley.

*Troilus and Cressida* has not had more than a dozen professional productions in London since Shakespeare wrote it over 300 years ago. It is interesting to recall that William Poel's production in 1913 was the first at Stratford, with Ion Swinley and Edith Evans in the title roles, Hermoine Gingold as Cassandra, and William Poel himself as Pandarus. This year in Anthony Quayle's production Paul Scofield plays Troilus and 19-year-old Heather Stannard Cressida.

Godfrey Tearle, back in England after playing Antony to Katherine Cornell's Cleopatra in America, not only produces *Othello*, but plays the title role.

Bath, the Queen of Georgian Cities is a fitting place for a Festival of the Arts. As one wanders among the well-planned streets, one's imagination is constantly stirred by the mural tablets which indicate the former residences of such famous people as R. B. Sheridan, Elizabeth Linley, David Garrick, Sarah Siddons, and Fanny Kemble. "The Bath Assembly" has laid special emphasis upon its appeal to the young theatre and music lover. The newly formed National Youth Orchestra under the baton of Dr. Reginald Jacques was invited to make its first public appearance along with the B.B.C. Symphony and the London Philharmonic Orchestras. The spacious Pavilion housed The Children's Theatre (administered by Glyndebourne and Toynbee Hall) in Clifford Bax's *Immortal Lady*, under the direction of John Allen. Sheridan's *School for Scandal* (with Evelyn Laye and Leon Quartermaine as Lady and Sir Peter Teazle) fitted perfectly into the Theatre Royal, a younger and more beautiful sister of the Bristol Theatre Royal. Support was very good throughout the Festival. The many visitors enjoyed as Festival Club the lovely eighteenth century Pump Room.

Overseas booking for the Second Edinburgh Festival has been good: visitors from America, Canada, Germany, and other European countries are expected. When the booking in Britain had been open for only two weeks "Sold Out" notices had to be posted for nine of the concerts. Opera once again is being presented at the Kings Theatre, plays at the Lyceum. During the first two weeks John Gielgud is producing there an adaptation of *Medea* by Robinson Jeffers, which has run all season on Broadway. Eileen Herlie who plays the title role is a Glasgow girl, and was once a member of a local repertory company.

During the third week the Compagnie Renaud-Barrault present *Hamlet*. Throughout the Festival Tyrone Guthrie is presenting at the Assembly Hall Sir David Lindsay's morality play *The Three Estates*. At the Gateway the Glyndebourne Children's Theatre Company will give Shaw's *Androcles and the Lion*, to be followed by The Pilgrim Players in *The Firstborn* (Christopher Fry) under the direction of E. Martin Browne, with Athene Seyler, Ivan Brandt, Robert Speaight and Henzie Raeburn.

Never before have so many professional Theatre Festivals been organised in any one year in the United Kingdom; may they long continue to flourish. W. G. B. M.

## THEATRE STUDENT'S PARADISE

The large theatre of the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art was destroyed by enemy action in 1941. The aim of the Council of the Academy and Sir Kenneth Barnes, the Principal, is to turn this opportunity to account, and to provide a theatre unsurpassed by any in the world for the purpose of training. The new auditorium as designed will accommodate an audience of 400 and the stage will be equipped for the presentation of Greek, eighteenth century, Shakespearean and modern plays. In connection with each Academy term it is hoped to arrange a season of four weeks before selected audiences, and thus fully prepare the students for contact with the public. Plans have been made by Mr. Alistair MacDonald and have been passed by the authorities with the exception of a few details still under consideration. The amount of cost in excess of the War Damage repayment contribution will be considerable, but the Principal feels no doubt that he will be able to obtain the amount necessary so that work on the building can proceed directly the licences are granted. In a future issue we hope to include a detailed description of this new theatre.

## COMPETITIONS

The Highbury Little Theatre, in common with other Little Theatres, is anxious to produce interesting new plays, and has therefore planned a competition for shorter works up to, say, 60 minutes' playing time. Technical advice and production in a working theatre are offered, and possibly publication. Closing date, September 30th, 1948. Full particulars may be obtained from 1948 Play Competition, Highbury Little Theatre, Sheffield Road, Sutton Coldfield, Warwickshire.

The Directors of the Liverpool Repertory Theatre Ltd. announce a £100 Prize Competition for the Best Play submitted to them before December 1st, 1948. The winning play will be produced at the Playhouse before June, 1949. Particulars of the Competition can be obtained on application to the Business Manager (Miss Carpenter), The Playhouse, Liverpool.

## THE WINNER TELEVISED

The Aberdare Little Theatre's *Birds of a Feather*, which won the Howard de Walden Cup, was televised by the B.B.C. on June 21st. This was the first time that an amateur Festival play had been shown to viewers.

## PROGRAMME COMPETITION

**M**R. MICHAEL WARRE, the designer of *Richard II* and *Saint Joan* for the Old Vic, kindly consented to judge the forty entries sent in, and this is his report:—

"Out of the large number of programmes submitted, those designed by Hans Schwarz for the Old Halesonians Amateur Dramatic Association were the most varied, stimulating and closely related to the spirit of each play. The most fascinating design was for *The Insect Play*, but unfortunately the colour and tone are not suitable for reproducing in these pages, so *Thunder Rock* takes its place. Two very interesting covers came from the Doncaster Playgoers Society, both designed by Thomas A. Anderson, one an excellent drawing for *The Playboy of the Western World*,—a very hefty looking Playboy against a distant landscape—and the other a more stylised cover for *The Trojan Women*, after the manner of Eric Gill. Bedford School Dramatic Society produced a fine forceful head of *Julius Caesar*, by W. R. Dalzell, though the effect of the design was partly spoilt by vertical lines running each side of the cover. The Kirkby Stephen and District Players submitted a delightful cover in line drawing by Joan Tiffin. It is interesting to note the enterprising printing of nearly all the programmes; many of them are in more than one colour, and vastly superior to the average commercial Theatre programme design.

"The prize goes to O.H.A.D.A., and we have pleasure in reproducing the cover for *Thunder Rock* (on page 25), together with the Bedford School Dramatic Society's *Julius Caesar* (opposite) as a second choice."

O.H.A.D.A., one of those Old Scholar companies that have always been such staunch supporters of the League, is completing the twenty-fifth year of its work at Halesowen, described by a native, Francis Brett Young, as "on the green fringe of the Black Country." It is well-known for its work in Worcestershire from the League's early days until now.

Schwarz, a member of the company, besides designing programme covers and publicity matter, creates the settings for their productions. He is well-known throughout the Midlands both as an exhibitor and as a mural artist; his best known work in this field is at Cadbury's of Bournville.

BEDFORD SCHOOL DRAMATIC SOCIETY PRESENTS



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S  
**JVLIVS CÆSAR**

IN THE GREAT HALL OF THE SCHOOL

# THEATRE BOOKSHELF

## ON PLAYS BY POETS

THE use of poetry in our theatre is so newly revived that informed and balanced comment on it is still rare. Most of the dramatic critics assess poetic plays in terms either of the naturalistic stage or of the tradition based on revivals of our older treasures. Doubly welcome, therefore, is an analysis by Christopher Hassall, himself a poetic dramatist. In that admirable series called *The Masque* (Curtain Press, 2s. each), No. 6 is *Notes on the Verse Drama*. Hassall suggests that the revival of interest in verse-drama is born of our age's uncertainties, which make us long for something beyond the "theatre of appearances," for a drama which moves "on two planes at once"; and also for a drama in which we participate by "fetching" with our imagination "the best out of a play." He passes to a shrewd analysis of the difference between the play of poetic quality executed in prose and the verse-treatment which gives us the play "poetry foremost," so to speak. He notices the difference made to the poetry by modern theatre-conditions, in which you don't need to say everything. Must the poet, in order to put the word first, "dispense with many of the assets of the post-Chekhov drama?" Our theatregoers "love . . . ready-made, as opposed to imagined, spectacle." Perhaps the most effective stimulant of the present poetic revival will be that drama which offers "no spectacle but what has first been evoked by a word," the Radio Drama.

For proof of its power we have Laurie Lee's "dramatic chronicle for radio" *The Voyage of Magellan* (John Lehmann, 10s. 6d.). Lee says "it plans, to transmit, above all else, a visual experience" and it certainly succeeds. Here is drama continually moving on Hassall's "two planes": the dark, passionate, devoted character of Magellan struggles in his human blindness towards an end of whose greater significance we are all the time kept aware. This dichotomy is paralleled by the skilful use of two planes in sound—the lovely song of San Roque against the sailors' sufferings, the music of Catholic ritual against the mutiny, the mixture of howls with musical effects at Magellan's death: all these combine to form a whole, "in the shape of its story: a circle," which is movingly dramatic just because it is instinct with a poet's imagination. This is not only an attempt which ought to be studied, it is a work of art which delights and satisfies.

Some recent poetic plays for the theatre

may be looked at in the light of Hassall's reflections. Charles Williams was always a difficult poet, because he writes dialectically and because he takes complex knowledge for granted. In the four plays brought together in *Seed of Adam* (Oxford, 6s.) we have enough evidence to prove that he is also a great poet. The peculiar metre which he developed for stage dialogue has a fascination for the ear with its interior rhymes and alliterations:—

"Dullards of darkness, Light's lazybones,  
Poor primitives of our natural bareness,  
Where's your awareness? will moans and groans

For gold of brawn or brain regain  
The way to the entry of Paradise?"

This is not easy to speak or to hear: but it is stage-worthy. More widely acceptable are *The House by the Stable* and *Grab and Grace*, the latter as yet unproduced. These plays have a refreshing nearness to contemporary speech and the latter especially is rich in humour; instance Faith, as a tough and sophisticated young woman:

"I am glad sometimes when my sister Hope takes my place for a night; and I can speak right and direct; the muscles in my face are controlled naturally and not by sheer work

to please Man's variable moods. Poor Man he is a sweet darling, but O I wish he had an adult intelligence."

The plays all demand athletic acting, both in speech and movement. *Grab and Grace* concludes with a stylised fight between two women that offers the producer an exhilarating chance. Both Williams' full-length *Cranmer* and a bill of these plays should be staged by a group technically equipped to do them justice.

Two translations next ask for attention. Ronald Duncan follows *The Eagle Has Two Heads* with another play of Jean Cocteau, *The Typewriter* (Dennis Dobson, 7s. 6d.). Cocteau describes his purpose in the theatre in a most interesting preface. "I am trying to find a balance between the stage and the audience," he says. "This play is in prose, an attack on the deadening influence of provincialism in France: it is not 'poetry foremost,' but it is tremendous theatre just because a poet wrote it: and the parts are superb."

Very different is the problem of translating Greek Tragedy. Gilbert Murray has a solution, but it is in essence a Victorian one. Many attempts have been made to find a

more modern alternative. Louis MacNeice's *Agamemnon* is the best for Aeschylus: and now comes a less striking but none the less successful attempt for Sophocles. It is good to see the Penguin Classics publish *The Trojan Plays* (2s.); and their translator, E. V. Rieu, is not only a good scholar but also a sensitive producer and actor, so that the theatrical values are much clearer than usual. The dignity of the great orchestra-theatre is maintained, yet the lines will come easily from the lips of a modern and the plays are revealed as containing many unexpected twists of character and even of humour. Mr. Watling is not a great poet, and cannot achieve the miracle of restoring the Chorus to its original lyric power: but he is no mean versifier, and has provided passages which will at the least afford the necessary relief from tragic tension. The result is a trilogy eminently playable.

Christopher Fry is now recognised as the foremost young poet of our stage. He is a theatre-man, and so his mind's working, however fantastic at times, is always in the theatre's terms. He is a man, too, who has that love of people that marks the born dramatist: no character is ever an idea to him, but always a person. He is theatrical news this year. *A Phoenix Too Frequent* (Hollis and Carter, 6s.) is internationally successful; *The Lady's Not For Burning*, another comedy made a sensational success at the Arts and goes to the West End; *The Firstborn* (C.U.P. 6s.), a tragedy about Moses of magnificent sweep and profound passion, is to be seen at the Edinburgh Festival (Pilgrim Players, the Gateway, September 6th), and now we have *Thor, with Angels*, the Canterbury Festival Play (H. T. Goulden, Canterbury, 2s.). The Festival Play is given in the Chapter House on an open platform and is limited to an hour-and-a-half. This does not allow for the full development of a complex theme: but Fry has chosen one which builds to a single great climax. His poetry, though still at times over-embroidered for the stage, is truly dramatic. The Saxon Cymen sees a Briton hanging crucified on the stage:

"Is it also here?"

Can the sun have written it so hotly on to my eyes?"

Here is the new-minted yet inevitable word of the poet, just as in the mouth of the Jewess Miriam (in *The Firstborn*):

"Creation tried our blood and brought it in guilty."

Fry is young, and since each of these plays have shown a different facet of his art, we may reckon that time is forming here a jewel of greatness. E.M.B.

## PLAYS

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## HISTORIES OF THE THEATRE

A SERIES of books on all kinds of theatrical history provided less confusing material than might be imagined and no doubt we have to thank the authors for this clarity, as the subjects dealt with are often poles apart. The largest and most impressive book in the list is the aptly named *New Theatres for Old* (Dennis Dobson, Ltd., 25s.). The author, Mordecai Gorelik, has made a most comprehensive study of world theatre, both historical and modern. Scarcely any detail in the complex development of drama is left untouched; even then, the book is larger than it need be, as Mr. Gorelik is fond of elaborating his points and at times repeating them; and the insistence on the serious, uplifting, not to say propaganda side of the theatre makes for heavy reading. Indeed, the book as it progresses through the ages seems to become more uncompromising, as witness the titles of the two last sections—"Theatre is a Tribunal" and "Theatre is Revelation." Theatre is also enjoyment, but the socially-conscious theatre of the future which the author seems to envisage would contain less of that ingredient than he might admit.

After the elaborate detail of the American book, it is somewhat of a relief to turn to *A Short History of English Drama* (Penguin Books, 1s. 6d.), by B. Ifor Evans. Dr. Evans wastes no words, and in a brief volume gives an adroitly condensed history of our stage from its medieval origins to the present day. An expert knowledge of the subject informs every page, but only when the author touches our own days does a more personal note appear—one would like to hear more from Dr. Evans of some of his opinions. After stating in the introduction that drama in England has constantly suffered from State discouragement of "a particularly unintelligent order," it is pleasant to be reminded by the author in his last chapter of some beneficial changes. Our theatre is, in almost every way, in an infinitely healthier condition than it was even ten years ago, and the book may well end on a note of hope and encouragement.

But however gratifying modern developments may be, we are still far from the amazing vitality of the Elizabethan and Jacobean stage. From this immortal period Lynette Feasey in *On the Playbill in Old London* (Harrap, 7s. 6d.), has selected four plays: *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *Doctor Faustus*, *Eastward Ho!* and *Henry VIII*, together with a Masque by Ben Johnson, and presents them in abbreviated form—the Katherine of Aragon episodes from *Henry VIII* being the most successful.

To each one is attached a brief history with notes for production. There is also a lively description of Elizabethan playhouses and performances in general. Drastic compression, however ingenious, does not suit all the plays, but Miss Feasey's book should prove useful and entertaining nevertheless.

It seems rather a jump from Ben Johnson's masques to David Garrick's Drury Lane, but Margaret Barton's *Garrick* (Faber and Faber, 21s.) is apparently so effortlessly written and consequently so easy to read that there is no perceptible jar as one passes a century, and it is only on reflection that the amount of research which has gone to the making of this book becomes evident. Although Garrick was presumably a great actor, he never became a great man in an age which produced many. Often jealous, sometimes timid and vacillating, Garrick subscribed far too readily to the appallingly snobbish and frequently meretricious taste of the time. But he remains a loveable character, especially as Miss Barton sees him, and this account of his life is not only cleverly marshalled and knit together, but presents one more surprising picture of the incongruities and absurdities of the eighteenth century stage.

However, these incongruities have their own charm for Richard Southern, whose handbook *The Georgian Playhouse* (Pleiades Books, 12s. 6d.) is a detailed description of a type of theatre peculiar to England. Bristol's Theatre Royal receives due attention, but it is the remains of more obscure theatres which seem to rouse the author's enthusiasm, and one imagines that nothing would excite him more than the discovery of a genuine proscenium door—with knocker. This "preliminary study," packed with information and enriched with unique photographs, makes a pleasant finale to an interesting batch of books.

F. SLADEN-SMITH

## BIRMINGHAM PAIR

"*The Birmingham Repertory Theatre*," by T. C. Kemp (Cornish Brothers, 15s.).

"*Alexandra Theatre (Birmingham)*," by M. F. K. Fraser (Cornish Brothers, 15s.).

These two books, read in conjunction with *Philip Rodway* and *A Tale of Two Theatres*, by his daughters (Cornish Bros. 1934), give a very vivid picture of the living theatre in Birmingham during the present century. Kemp goes back to 1879, the year of Barry Jackson's birth, but it was not until 1913 that this theatre was opened. At the time of writing, the Birmingham Repertory Company is at the St. James's Theatre, London, playing *The Rivals* in modern dress. Sir Barry has been a pioneer in this country

of presenting the classics in modern dress, notably *Hamlet* (1923-26 season), and in the 1928-29 season *Macbeth*, *The Shrew* and *Othello*. Birmingham's repertory of plays between 1939 and 1947 might well be regarded as a model for all repertory theatres, and the list of players is so brilliant that few other theatrical enterprises could eclipse it.

On several occasions during the past thirty-five years the entire Birmingham Company has moved to London with personnel, scenery and costumes unchanged.

The "Rep." with 400 seats has never entered the field of commercial theatre, but its capacious neighbour the "Alex", whilst also in private ownership, has freely admitted its quite honourable commercial intention, and has now established itself as a real family theatre where first class pantomimes, number one touring attractions and popular Repertory productions share the stage. Fraser's record, written in a very racy and ingratiating style, starts with the building of the original theatre in 1901, but the average reader will be most interested from the point when at the age of 36 Leon Salberg started a family regime which is now being carried on with inherited theatrical foresight by his son, Derek. Apart from the year 1935, when the theatre was completely rebuilt, it has never been closed (except for rehearsals), not even during the last war years, although incendiaries burst through the roof and the theatre stores were burnt out. The author, known affectionately in Birmingham as Mickie Fraser, has caught the gay spirit of this theatre which continues to cater for what a large industrial city wants, with one eye upon the artistic heights and the other not improperly upon the box office till. This book, too, has most illuminating appendices of pantomimes, plays and players, including of course many of the biggest names in vaudeville, who have starred in the Salberg pantomimes.

W. BUSHILL-MATTHEWS

#### SHAKESPEARE COLLECTION

THE first issue of *Shakespeare Survey* (C.U.P., 12s. 6d.) is good in itself and bodes well for the future. Professor Allardyce Nicoll and his coadjutors plan to give us every year a volume with three features: a detailed study of conclusions reached in some particular aspect of Shakespeare scholarship, an evaluation of the year's Shakespearean productions, and a description of the books published. The first number is excellent value and very well produced. Its detailed study is on the Shakespearean Stage, and ranges from Professor Nicoll's own evaluation of the mass

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of work which has recently revealed to us how the plays were really presented, through G. E. Bentley's article on the indoor Blackfriars Theatre which is almost as startling as was J. C. Adams' *The Globe Playhouse*, to a minute examination of the *Titus Andronicus* and *Swan* drawings of 1595 and 1598. Here is no dry-as-dust scholarship, but a lively and imaginative appreciation of the conditions of dramatic creation. In addition, the book contains essays by George Rylands and Charles Landstone on current productions. No one who wants to be up to date in Shakespearean knowledge can afford to miss this yearly volume.

*Hamlet* is never out of the news. The film has brought its own book, *The Film Hamlet* (Saturn Press, 7s. 6d.) which is, disappointingly, filled only with well-illustrated mutual admiration. Among the articles contributed by the chief begetters of the film, the most revealing is Sir Laurence's own, telling how "quite suddenly one day I visualised the final shot of *Hamlet*." We see now how a film full of good things was spoilt by beginning from the wrong end—from a staircase against the sky, instead of from Shakespeare's text.

The film declares in its hoarse initial whisper that "this was the tragedy of a man who could not make up his mind." Two other commentators offer fresh explanations both well worth study. Senor de Madariaga was commissioned to make a Spanish translation and found that he must first set down his convictions *On Hamlet* (Hollis & Carter, 10s. 6d.). For him, the tragedy is that of an egocentric, inhibited from action by his inability to communicate with any other soul. It is a searching analysis, controverting the sentimental view of Hamlet whom Sr. de Madariaga describes as "a Borgian" of the true Renaissance breed, and of Ophelia whom he finds to be a flirt. Does it go too far? At least its careful study of the text inspires a lively respect. So also does that of Mr. Roy Walker, who in taking *The Time is Out of Joint* (Dakers, 6s.) as his title stresses his concern with the play's revelation of the state of society. This is a deeply thoughtful book.

*Stanislavsky Produces Othello* (Bles, 21s.), gives us an insight into how this great director's mind works, and for that alone would be worth twice the guinea asked for it. The book takes the form of full notes for a production which illness compelled him to hand over to another. The director's imagination, when concentrated on a play, works in many fields at once, and that glorious jumble is reproduced for us in print. We begin with stage settings, and such purely technical details as how a gondola

is to move across the stage: but in a moment we are plunged into character and psychology, in a detailed analysis of Roderigo's and Iago's past and present motives. Costume, effects, lighting, all peep in; but the play progresses in a series of minute directions, sometimes line by line, of how the parts should be acted. Agree with it or not, this is a master's direction, and you can learn more of how to produce by studying this book along with Shakespeare's text, than from twenty articles or lectures.

Finally, an original contribution by Russell Thorndike, *In the Steps of Shakespeare* (Rich and Cowan, 12s. 6d.). This experienced Shakespearean has applied H. V. Morton's pattern to the plays, taking us on a tour of the actual spots where the scenes are supposed to be set. Much quotation from contemporary documents is added to the author's own scholarship to make a book which, while it may not prove easy to read through, will be well worth carrying about England as a guide-book. E.M.B.

#### PLAYS

"*She Wanted a Cream Front Door*," by A. R. Wharmore. (Three Acts. 3 sets. 10 m., 7 f.) Deane 4s.

A farce in the Aldwych tradition. The West End cast included Robertson Hare and Peter Hadden who, of course, had the best parts, but there is one good part for a woman. The characters are a useless set of people who treat marital relationship casually and lightheartedly, but the hotel bedroom scene takes an unusual and amusing turn which renders it comparatively inoffensive.

"*The Bully*," by Walter Dierickx and Conrad Carter. A short comedy in Three Acts for ten women. (1 set.) Chas. H. Fox Ltd. 4s.

The principal character in this play, a famous novelist, is not seen. Confined to his room with a broken leg, he communicates with his four daughters and the domestics by house phone. While his household have to endure a veritable reign of terror, his house is a shrine visited by female worshippers of his name and works. He is ultimately tamed by a new woman secretary. An amusing and entertaining piece, considerably better than the great majority of plays for women. It needs judicious cutting particularly in Act III, where the comedy is allowed to develop into farce, which is a pity.

"*Saturday Night at the Half Way House*," by W. Branch Johnson. One-Act. (4 m.) Chas. H. Fox Ltd. 1s. 6d.

The inn is a kind of clearing house for souls, run by the Archangel Michael. His struggle with Satan for the soul of a simple French fisherman is not very exciting, but the heavenly one wins on points.

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"Gin Palace," by Harford James. *Three Acts.* (1 Set. 9 m., 9f.) French. 35.

The scene is the saloon bar of "The Angel," London, a glittering gin palace of Victorian character in the year 1900. A play of robust construction with plenty of scope for character acting. The parts, which include the old proprietress (a strong part) her shiftless grandson, an heroic barmaid, an unscrupulous bookmaker, touts, police, and customers of all types, are all worth playing. There is strong drama and humour. This is not a play for beginners.

"Lovely to Look At," by Philip Johnson. *Comedy. Three Acts.* (1 Set. 4 m., 4f.) French. 45.

A rather ornate and artistic set is essential and the leading lady must be exquisitely dressed with plenty of changes. A wealthy art connoisseur observing a beautiful woman feeding the pigeons before St. Mark's, Venice, exclaims, "God! but she's beautiful, and she's just got to belong to me." So he marries her out of hand and adds her to his collection of *objets d'art* in London. To four friends, whose marriages have not been successful, he explains his belief that where they have erred is in seeking to know too much of their wives. He knows nothing of his excepting that she is a thing of beauty, and any attempts on her part towards a closer relationship are thwarted. The four friends have been invited to meet Sonia who makes a spectacular entrance and then announces to her husband's displeasure, that she has invited two friends to the gathering. She opens the door and introduces the cook (in evening dress) with, "I want you to meet my mother," and when the butler announces dinner, she says, "Thank you very much, father." Nobody speaks. Nobody can speak. Act II, Sc. 3—Revelation and recrimination. Act III.—Reconciliation.

"Last Page," by James Hadley Chase. *Three Acts.* (1 Set. 7 m., 5f.) French. 35. 6d.

To those who have a taste for crime plays this can be recommended. The scene is a City Booksellers and the set is interestingly divided into two parts—the entrance lobby of the shop L. and the Manager's Office R.—so that a fairly wide stage is required. As one with a considerable knowledge of, and respect for, our City bookshops, I refuse to believe that one of them could be the scene of such sordidness, blackmail and petty theft, but that is by the way. The play is well constructed, and I was quite unprepared for the clever twist in the last scene.

A. H. WHARRIER

## THE LIBRARY

WE illustrate a page of a book from the Library, which bears eloquent testimony to the misery inflicted upon all subsequent borrowers by some people's immoral habits. Library books belong to all members, not just the one who plays a part or makes the prompt copy in a particular show. Therefore in future please note :—

Any borrower who seriously defaces a book will be charged its full purchase price, and will not be allowed to borrow more books till it is paid.

During the past few weeks an increasing number of members have been enclosing both money and letters inside parcels of returned library books. The parcels often arrive minus outer wrapping paper, and postal orders and loose cash are sometimes discovered at the bottom of the mail sacks. The B.D.L. cannot hold itself responsible for remittances sent in this way, and the Librarian would remind borrowers that all requests for books and payment of accounts should be sent under separate cover.

### LATE OPENING

We are sure that members will welcome the restoration of evening opening. It will start in September, when the Library will be open on

Wednesdays till 9 p.m.

We hope to extend this later if staff permits.

### WHO'LL SELL?

The Librarian will be glad to receive offers of any sets or single copies of plays, and of theatre books which readers can sell. A list of those specially required will be published in our next issue.

### EXCHANGE OF SCRIPTS

Many plays are still out of print, and companies both professional and amateur are making cyclostyled and typewritten sets for their productions. The League will be glad to act as a clearing-house for information through which these can be made available, on hire or loan, direct from one company to the other. If you have such sets, please inform the Librarian, stating :—

Name and Address of your Secretary.

Name of Play.

Number of Copies.

Terms on which you will hire.

Anyone using such sets of copyright plays must of course obtain the permission of the author's agents to do so.

# "GO DOG"

ACT II THEY WALK ALONE

ROBERT: What is it?

BESS: Listen.

*The faint hint of the dog, manfully rising then ending in a yelp—is heard.*

SAUL: Oh, God. That's dreadful.

BESS: It is, it is.

ROBERT: What?

BESS: We're not the only ones after Rahmy.

ROBERT: Maybe.

BESS: Oh, yes, I know. She's round here somewhere. Listen to that dog telling us.

SAUL: Come on, then. (Pulls up his collar, goes on.)

ROBERT: Into the kitchen.

SAUL: Into the kitchen.

BESS: Into the kitchen.

ROBERT: Into the kitchen.

SAUL: Into the kitchen.

BESS: Into the kitchen.

ROBERT: Into the kitchen.

SAUL: Into the kitchen.

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BESS: Into the kitchen.

ROBERT: Into the kitchen.

SAUL: Into the kitchen.

BESS: Into the kitchen.

ROBERT: Into the kitchen.

WANDY ELECTRIC BOY

ACT II THEY WALK ALONE

ROBERT (hurriedly): All right, I'll get your

name. (Goes off R.)

BESS (sighs): You oughter get my goldfishes, too.

BESS:

ROBERT (calling off R.): All right, Bess.

BESS (for the dog's sake): Grand night,

goldfishes! Yes.

ROBERT: Sorry! (He has found his stick, he

helps Bess with notebook, goldfishes, etc., then goes for

goldfishes.) Ready?

BESS: Ready.

ROBERT: Ready.

BESS: Ready.

ROBERT: Ready.

BESS: Ready.

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ROBERT: Ready.

BESS: Ready.

# CIVIC THEATRE DISCUSSION

**P**ROPOSED at the Annual Conference by Alderman A. N. Bennett, *Chairman of the Libraries, Museums, Art and Music Committee of Swindon Borough Council*—

"That the Council of the League be urged to draw the attention of the Civic Authorities, without delay, to the desirability of exercising their powers to provide Civic Theatres in all cities and towns as may be appropriate."

I propose this motion with pleasure and great confidence, because Swindon Town Council has gained some degree of fame by its vigorous encouragement of the Arts. But it has not yet had an opportunity of deciding what further steps it will take to use the new powers and so my words must be accepted as my own. I speak as one born of the people, concerned only that they shall be given ever increasing opportunities of enjoying a full life.

But why Civic Theatres? Local Government has moved steadily from means to ends, and from the essential services like drains, roads, water, to what will in time be called the still more essential services—Parks, Libraries, Art Galleries, and now concerts, film and stage shows. The State and Municipal Theatre is an accepted fact, and a reason for pride in France, Russia, Germany, Italy, and other countries: why not in England? In my home town, Swindon, there are two theatres—one variety and one repertory—offering between them a fair range of stage shows. But I want for Swindon folk *all* that the stage can offer. Too often and too long has box office appeal determined the standards of entertainment. Great artists in rare productions cost money—more, perhaps, than the ordinary Theatre Manager cares to risk, except in large cities. That is where the Civic Theatre comes into the picture, making it possible for all people to see first class shows. The Civic Theatre too can give great and needed encouragement to amateur societies. It can operate in its own distinctive way side by side with the commercial theatre, which can be left free to exploit popular demand. Theatres in towns and cities can help to send stage shows, both professional and amateur, to suitable halls in small towns and villages.

Art sprang from the people, but the events of the industrial revolution divorced the people from art. To-day the industrial worker is escaping from wage slavery. The 44-hour week is at once a triumph and a trial of our time, setting a challenge to Local Authorities to provide means of spending

leisure in a worthwhile manner. There is a need for hard work and increased production, but with Priestley I say we must not overlook the fact that increased production by itself may lead to nervous exhaustion and inferior products, and may need to be balanced by proper recreation in leisure time. So I use the words "without delay." This does not mean that I think theatres can spring up in a few weeks or even years, but I say to Authorities: "Recognise the principle now and include theatres in all new planning and in the meantime make do by equipping such halls as are suitable." To Authorities who are afraid of the cost as a drain on their finances I would point out that though by and large the theatre should pay for itself, yet for reasons which I have given, it is as necessary as parks and libraries.

Now a word to professional players, producers, directors. Because the theatre is subsidised by public money there is not an unlimited supply of funds, and while good service in this, as in other, spheres must be properly remunerated, there must be full appreciation of the responsibilities of Authorities. Priestley has spoken of the perils of Committee control, but let us not be disturbed by this prospect; Local Government does not work like that. The Civic Theatre will be staffed by experts in the same way as Education, transport and other departments are staffed. Commonsense, goodwill and co-operation between Authorities and the profession will lead to a glorious future for the theatre.

Councillor H. Diment of Swindon, seconded the Resolution. What is being done in this corner of Wiltshire is not being done from one angle only; both sides of the house are thinking along the same lines. We now have to get public interest gingered up and to persuade the Councils to attempt to use the powers. The amateur movement comes strongly into this. We cannot have a professional Civic Theatre immediately; we have to get it going gradually, but without too much expenditure of money it can be started through the amateur movement. With a united front of amateurs and professionals there will be such a body of opinion that the Councils will be unable to withstand it.

Mr. Andrew Campbell: The Conference should not pass without noting publicly that the British Drama League was responsible more than any other organisation for securing the inclusion of Section 132 in the Local Government Act. We ought to pay tribute to those far-sighted people, the

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## PITMAN

Parker Street, Kingsway, W.C.2

League's Council, who in the dark days of the war sat down to prepare that now famous statement of the League. But I would like to give a warning: I understand that immediately after the Act was passed certain Local Authorities received a spate of offers of help in the organisation of their entertainment. The League has an enormous responsibility in offering its very great experience and advice to any Authority who wish to embark on these activities. In using public money it is important that every scheme put forward should be properly considered and have a chance of success. I want also to stress the need for professional and amateur co-operation. Sometimes if a local Arts Council takes over a theatre building for professional shows, those amateur societies who had had its use in the past may lose it. Amateurs must not mind; they must put up with it in the greater interest of the theatre. Though it is not possible to build for a number of years, there are other ways of helping drama, such as sponsoring the visits of Arts Council companies. I hope the League's Council will urge on the Minister of Works, who at present is sympathetic but not able to be very helpful, that as soon as is reasonably possible those small amounts of building material required to re-equip and re-open theatres should be made available.

Mr. Robert G. Newton: I realise more and more that the Local Authority is bound to play an increasing part in the development of amateur and professional drama. The formation of Arts Councils by the Local Authorities for the promotion of artistic activity within the Borough is a very good step in the right direction. St. Pancras, Lewisham, Hornsey and Willesden are about to form bodies of this kind, which will be most helpful in relating the statutory to the voluntary bodies.

Mr. G. Sharp (Unity Theatre Society): Our greatest task is to get these powers implemented. I would make one plea to the League—that it should interpret them widely. It should get affiliated members of the League to mobilise the fullest amount of opinion in this campaign. Our activities may change the attitude of many Local Authorities in England towards drama. It is still regarded as a luxury, but it is really vital in people's lives and in the nation's existence.

The Chairman then spoke of the Civic Theatres Committee set up by the League, which was preparing a pamphlet setting out to Local Authorities what they can actually do under these powers, and how they should go about it. "We want you to use your influence in the place where you live," he

*Leichner*

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said, "to see that those suggestions are implemented. Only you can do it. Nothing will come of this unless the professional and amateur theatre workers and lovers get together, unite themselves and prepare a programme of such work in the actual production of shows as will commend itself to the audience in that place. Our greatest danger is to forget the audience."

Mr. C. A. Golding (Company of Crown Players): Authorities fail to realise that they can make their own property available to amateur companies in their town at reduced charges, thus assisting out of rate revenue. It was only by banding together in our local Arts Council all the worthwhile artistic endeavour in the town and more or less compelling the Local Authorities to reduce the rent to a reasonable figure that we were able to get our Town Hall put to its proper use. Before the war it was used perhaps once or twice during the summer. Now we are putting on three shows a week.

Councillor C. E. Nicklin (Guildford Youth Committee): It is easy in these days to find ways and opportunities of spending public money. I believe that the place at which the Local Authority should intervene is where private enterprise is failing to meet the needs of the people. In my Borough we have a repertory theatre with some 8,000 members. This theatre provides an inspiration, and draws strength from its very difficulties which during the bad winter of 1947 and good summer of 1947 resulted in a deficit of £1,800. This it wiped out during last winter. I hope we are not going to get into the hands of salaried organisers. Public money will be valuable insofar as it is pumped into the main arteries of the theatre. I would ask the Conference to stress the idea that what we want is public interest and enthusiasm, widely spread, for the theatre as a living Art.

The Resolution, on being put to the vote, was carried unanimously.

Proposed by Birmingham Amateur Dramatic Federation:—

"That in view of the fact that large areas of population in various parts of the United Kingdom have no opportunity of witnessing regularly performances of 'live' drama, every attempt should be made to encourage its presentation at a high standard in centres of population of at least 15,000 inhabitants where no professional performances of plays are at present being given and in order to support such endeavour, play-going clubs should be formed to assure adequate audiences."

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Christopher Fry

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**FREDERICK MULLER**  
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Mr. W. Bushill-Matthews : This Resolution follows very properly after the last one. This Conference should be reminded of the serious state of affairs in this country. If you look at a map of Great Britain you will find large tracts of country which are completely devoid of any living theatre producing plays regularly throughout the whole year. I seek something really practical in this Resolution which can be done at once. It is easy to talk loosely about the theatre and about providing theatre buildings, actors and producers. But one seldom hears much about the audience. Various people associated with the Arts Council have told me that their policy is not to seek out a place where there is no living theatre and say : "We are going to put a theatre in this place." They feel they should be satisfied first of all that a demand exists. This is where the Conference and the League can enter at once. They can work up interest in the living theatre and create a demand so that the Local Authority will be primed for what is required as soon as other conditions permit — the establishment of Civic Theatres. I urge you all to see that in towns where there is no living theatre, play-going clubs are formed at once, whether there is any chance of a theatre being built or not. Organise parties to the nearest living theatre, brains trusts, etc ; encourage interest in Festivals such as Stratford, Bath, Edinburgh and in the theatre generally. The founders of the Repertory theatres at such places as Birmingham and Liverpool, and people like Lilian Baylis—none of these waited until they got a theatre. They created a terrific demand to establish a theatre.

Mr. William Dunn (Birmingham A.D.F.) seconded the Resolution : I represent the union of the amateur and professional. I am the Parks Entertainment Officer of Birmingham and the General Secretary of the local Amateur Dramatic Federation, and I would like to tell you something of the way we are bringing it about there. All of our Parks this summer are going to give plays. We are having two professional and four amateur companies, presenting a great number of plays in ten parks. *That* is taking drama to our citizen's doorsteps. You can all persuade your Local Authorities to do something like that. We cannot yet build theatres, but we can build marquees, which we call Summer Theatres. They measure about 150 ft. by 50 ft. We have built stages and designed sets ; we have lighting by Strand and sound by Tannoy. This work is done with the backing of the City Council, who gave £10,000 this year to spend on drama alone.

Mr. S. F. Goodchild (Wilts. County

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Drama Council): As a minimum limit of population 15,000 seems excessive. Surely small places require consideration and speaking as one who has the great fortune of living in a town of less than 5,000 I think we ought to come in too. If you can interest one in twenty people in a town of 15,000 you get 750 interested. In 5,000 you get about 200, which is surely enough. I should like to see the Resolution take more account of small country towns.

Mr. C. B. Purdom: Every amateur society should give very particular attention to creating an audience for itself. But also every society should be a play-going club. When I go through the country and talk to commercial managers they complain that amateurs don't support them. They can understand it when they don't deserve artistic support, but even when they put on plays that are good the amateurs don't come. Amateurs should be assiduous attenders of the theatre; how else can they hope to perfect their work? Secondly, as to the development of audiences and dramatic performances in small places. The new powers are given only to counties and county boroughs. The majority of towns in this country are urban boroughs and urban districts which don't possess them. They have to appeal to the County Council to take action. In such places one has not only to convert the Local Authority, but also the County Council. I hope we shall give strong support here.

Miss Tench (Playgoers, Amersham): The Amersham Repertory Theatre has worked out a scheme of a mobile unit that takes theatre to the villages of Bucks. It does this in conjunction with the Education Committee most successfully. In some of the remoter villages adult audiences had never seen a live performance.

Miss Ward Smith (Bucks Drama Adviser): I brought down to Buckinghamshire last summer the Young Vic with *Noah*. On the Saturday before the performance, in spite of adequate publicity, under thirty seats were sold. One of the Committee said: "Why should they come? They want to act." We have in the county several good repertory companies. One has this last week closed down for lack of support. As to the mobile unit, I organised that and went to every performance. The public did not support it. In one case, owing to local apathy, there were twenty-three people in the audience.

Miss Talbot (Leeds Training College): We should start with our children and form theatre clubs. Through the children we get the audiences of the future.

The Resolution was carried unanimously.

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# AMATEUR SURVEY

## AN ANGLO-JEWISH GROUP

In response to many requests, the *Cameo Players* are forming an Anglo-Jewish Theatre Group which will present plays of Jewish interest. Specialist groups studying production, stage-management and make-up are in the process of formation, and lectures by prominent personalities on various aspects of the theatre have been arranged. A playwriting group is also being formed to encourage the writing of plays in English with Jewish themes. A welcome is extended to all interested; stage technicians, decor artists and electricians are urgently needed, as well as actors. For further details write to Miss E. Cohen, 3 Kenneth Crescent, London, N.W.2.

## OVERSEAS

The *O.U.D.S.* summer production, which opened in Mansfield College garden, was Ben Johnson's "Epicoene, or the Silent Woman." The company of twenty-seven players toured France during July, performing on the 18th at Avignon Festival, followed by a visit to several university towns. The project has received the encouragement of the B.D.L. and the French Ministry of Education. The play is perhaps the nearest approach to the comedy of Moliere and, translated by Marcel Achard, was performed at the Atelier in 1925. In April *The Springs Repertory Players* (South Africa) presented Geoffrey Whitworth's "Haunted Houses." Contrary to its title "Haunted Houses" is not a blood-chilling mystery thriller, but a tender, unusual story of three different families. The play was well received by a large audience.

## LONDON UNITY'S YEAR

*Unity Theatre* has had an exciting year. Starting 1947 with a deficit it is to-day free of debt, has overhauled its heating and lighting equipment, and its theatre is being repaired and redecorated. In the very hot August of 1947, Unity lost £400 on an experimental production, but more than recovered this with a revival of "Matchgirls," Gorki's "Enemies," and "Winkles and Champagne," which was televised. Three hundred agricultural workers from Dorset attended a special matinee of "Six Men of Dorset," the story of the Tolpuddle Martyrs. Finally, "The Whole World Over" (Simonov), aroused the interest of commercial managements.

## DESIGNERS AND TECHNICIANS

*The Rose Theatre Club*, Burnley, consisting of past and present scholars of Rosegrove

Modern Secondary School, with an age-range of 11 to 15½, has produced, since it started in Spring 1946, five full-length Shakespearean plays and Priestley's "Laburnham Grove." Scenery, lighting and costumes are the work of members. Visits to amateur and professional shows are arranged, and play-readings regularly held. Plans include "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "The Duke in Darkness," and "Hamlet."

To mark its twenty-first Anniversary in April, *The Benfield Dramatic Society* presented "The Queen's Move" (Harland), a play about Lady Jane Grey. The Society's list of past productions is impressive and includes "Bill of Divorcement," "Yellow Sands," "Dona Clarines," and "The Whiteheaded Boy." The Group design and execute their own sets and operate and maintain their own lighting equipment.

*The Old Southallians* formed themselves into a Dramatic Society to present a pantomime which one of them had written. The Society has since produced many plays including "Suspect," "Night Must Fall," and "Rebecca." The Society has a large technical staff who have built a complete set of adaptable scenery. They assist neighbouring companies with players and equipment.

## OPEN-AIR SHAKESPEARE

*The Richmond Shakespeare Society* chose "A Midsummer Night's Dream" for their fourteenth annual open-air production in the Terrace Gardens, Richmond. Joseph O'Connor and Naita Moore directed the play, using Mendelssohn's music. With the return of the single-hour summertime the flood-lighting was seen to greater advantage and improved sound equipment was installed.

## FROM THE NORTH

A Guild play is projected for the Autumn by the *Bradford and District Theatre Guild*. This is to be a combined effort of the Guild's affiliated societies. Pointing out that in all parts of the country there is a demand for plays for children, Marian Briggs, in an article in the Guild's Bulletin, suggests that amateurs should help to provide such plays. Costume need not be an insurmountable difficulty—old and faded garments could be dyed and barge-balloon material painted with happy effect.

*St. Augustine's Dramatic Society*, Preston, has since 1946 produced three full-length plays, two of which "Money Talks," and "Murder in the Sacristy," were written by the producer, Father Vincent Fallona.

DORIS HUTTON

# DOYEN OF AMATEUR ACTORS



THE Hon. Gilbert Coleridge has entered his ninetieth year. He was one of the founders of the O.U.D.S. and the record of his school and college days gives us a vivid picture of an era which now seems very remote, but is responsible for much of the best in amateur acting to-day.

Mr. Coleridge tells in *Eton in the Seventies* of a school life in which, though Literary and Musical Societies already existed, there was no drama. But he used to haunt the boathouse, where Harry Goodman, the boat-builder, looked like an actor and talked of the stage with love. His sanctum was decorated with coloured prints of the theatrical great: "Ah, Sir, Macready was a great actor, the greatest I have ever seen. Kean was well enough—flashing eyes and all that—but for tragedy, give me Macready! What? have I seen this new man (Irving) in Miss Bateman's company? Why, I went up a' purpose to see him last winter, the papers said so much about him. What do I think?" Then he would make a face as if he had smelt a bad smell. "Thin, Sir, too thin. Garrick? Go along! you're getting at me. He was before my time."

At Oxford Gilbert Coleridge found himself in congenial company. There are seventy-nine names of Oxford men in *Who's Who in the Theatre*, testimony enough to the influence the O.U.D.S. has exercised. Among the group who founded the O.U.D.S. were "Jimmy" Adderley, Arthur Bouchier, and Allan Mackinnon, who wrote the Society's history in *The Oxford Amateurs*. Before

O.U.D.S. there was a Philothespian Society giving surreptitious performances of modern plays. Mr. Coleridge made his first stage appearance with them as Uncle Ben in *Dearer Than Life*.

The University Authorities, however, looked unkindly on these activities, when the Philothespians removed from College buildings to public halls. Finally, at Michaelmas, 1884, the Oxford University Dramatic Society was formed, with a charter from the great Dr. Benjamin Jowitt of Balliol, then Vice-Chancellor, for the performance of Shakespearean and Greek plays. Its first production was *Henry IV, Part I*. Arthur Bouchier was cast for Hotspur, E. Holman Clark for the First Carrier, and Gilbert Coleridge for Falstaff. Jowitt, seeing the name of this slim youth against the part of the fat knight, commented, "Am I not vilely fallen away?" But the youth is still hale enough at ninety to play the part of a genial grandfather to the vigorous O.U.D.S. of 1948.

FRANK F. SMITH



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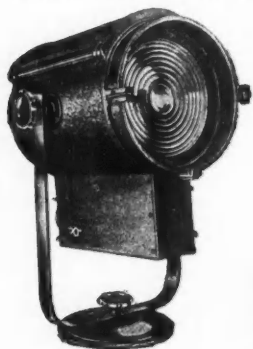
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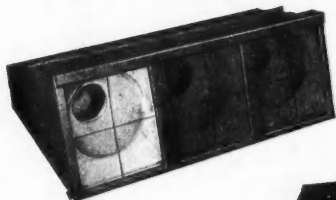
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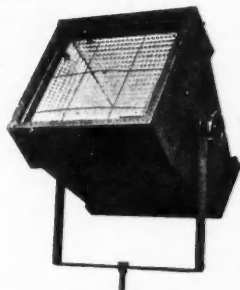
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